

**HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION
FULL COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES
December 14, 2005, 4:30 p.m. Council Chambers**

UNOFFICIAL MEETING

PRESENT

Cindy Felsten
Ian Kohen
Greg Lewis
Chrystal Pushor
John Roberts

ABSENT

Jay Myers
Gil Palmer
Wes Roy
Marie Schroeder
Jason Staley
Barbara Stevens

Personnel Director Chuck Boll was present.

STAFF PRESENT:

Director Arlette Tinsley, Deputy Director Lorraine Smith, Secretary Lula Young.

SECRETARY'S REPORT:

Commissioner Felsten called roll. No motion to accept the November minutes due to the lack of a quorum.

TREASURER'S REPORT:

Commissioner Felsten reported no changes in the account, balance remains at \$6,199.02.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT:

Director Tinsley updated Commissioners on the busy month that included working on the end of the year reports for the Mayor and City Council members. A copy will be provided to Commissioners. Trainings for the month included an Anti-Bullying/Anti-Harassment training for Jennings County Middle school, staff members at St. Peter's Lutheran school and all 300 students in the third through eighth grades. The school already has a draft of an Anti-Bullying/Anti-Harassment Policy in place.

Director Tinsley advised Commissioners of the invitation received from Lt. Rudy Olivo to provide training, in February, for East High School ESL students covering the same anti-

bullying/harassment and complaint process training that was provided to Northside, Central and North. The annual diversity training for the police department is scheduled for January. Director Tinsley's topic will be minority religions. This training is made possible by an invitation from the chief.

Director Tinsley provided an update on the Anti-harassment brochure and survey selected as a senior project by Miss Ebun Okuleye. Based upon a brochure created in Massachusetts that helps kids and parents understand hate crimes and harassment in schools, Miss Okuleye is creating a brochure for local use that will include local contacts. Additional activities will include community interviews and student surveys. The initial outline received was extremely well written.

Director Tinsley advised that a new complaint was accepted involving housing discrimination based on national origin. Seventeen cases have been closed and eighteen were filed in 2005. A mediation is scheduled for January. A housing complaint will be closed due to the complainant's failure to cooperate.

Commissioners discussed the increased Asian and Southeast Asian population locally. Additional discussion ensued regarding correct identification, terminology and sensitivity within the different ethnic groups.

Director Tinsley reported on the support she and Deputy Director Smith are providing a sub-group of the NAACP that is concerned about issues local African-American youths are experiencing and identifying within the school system. Deputy Director Smith is currently involved with interviews at Kidscommons in their efforts to hire a new Executive Director.

OPEN FORUM:

Commissioners Kohen, Lewis and Roberts voiced inquiries and observations surrounding the increased number of complaints, any visible patterns in types of complaints and any connection to the increased education of the community in general. Director Tinsley acknowledged the changes in the types of complaints that are being filed.

Commissioner Felsten shared information that South Africa has now joined four other countries that allow same-sex marriages. The rationale was based on the benefits and responsibilities of marriage and the lack of equal rights within that realm rather than marriage itself.

ANNUAL DINNER:

Director Tinsley advised Commissioners that after considerable effort by Commissioner Felsten, we still have not received a commitment from Tavis Smiley to provide the annual dinner keynote. Commissioner Felsten was advised by her contact to Mr. Smiley to pursue our next potential speaker. The Commission's second choice is Dr. Eric Jolly, Executive Director of the Minnesota Children's Museum. Dr. Jolly is a Native American member of the Cherokee Nation. A letter, drafted by Deputy Director Smith, will be sent inviting Dr. Jolly to provide the keynote address.

ESSAY/ART CONTEST:

Director Tinsley advised that Essay/Art contest information would be delivered to the schools after their holiday break. After the speaker is obtained, a date will be set.

ACTION ITEM - 2006 MEETING DATES:

Commissioners present agreed to attend the meeting scheduled for January 25, 2006. Unofficial meeting dates were provided for commissioner review. Director Tinsley requested Commissioners review the dates and mark any suggestions or requested date changes. The 2006 meeting dates can be reviewed and approved at the January 25th Commission meeting.

LIAISON UPDATES – GAY/STRAIGHT ALLIANCE:

Commissioner Kohen updated the Commissioners regarding multiple communications with the Director regarding the Alliance's concern about meeting with the new police chief. Alliance members appeared satisfied with the information received and the additional communication from Chief Martin.

Director Tinsley advised that she has been asked by a diversity group at Cummins – COB to provide a lunch training on Sexual Orientation and the Law in June for Gay Rights month.

LIAISON UPDATES – INTERFAITH FORUM:

Director Tinsley advised Commissioners of communications with Chris Lemley that the diversity training for the police department will include the religious diversity DVD produced by the Chicago Police Department.

Meeting adjourned.